Traditional Narrative Elements in *The Three Perils of Woman*

Valentina Bold

I would like to begin with a quotation from *The Three Perils of Woman*; its style is as important as the content:

> Is it not a hellish thing; that because a woman is made beautiful, and simple, and loving, that therefore she is to be betrayed and degraded, and then abominated and kicked about, as she were not fit to live on the face of God's earth?[1]

This statement encapsulates the ethos of *The Three Perils of Woman*, and it highlights the main problems faced in understanding the text. On the one hand (while Hogg was not a proto-feminist by any stretch of the imagination), it is essential to bear his declared purpose in mind: to warn women against the dangers of Scottish social mores. On the other hand, his mastery of the idiom of the novel of manners is so total as to suggest parody. I am going to explore one of the most crucial aspects of *Three Perils of Woman*, which has been hitherto ignored: its folkloric content. Through an examination of its traditional narrative elements, I hope to show that *Three Perils of Woman* is a vital expression of Hogg's views on traditional culture and especially the position of women in Scotland. Furthermore, I intend to highlight the ambiguities of his presentation, in an attempt to demonstrate Hogg's dualistic attitude towards traditional culture.

Like Allan Ramsay in *The Gentle Shepherd*, Hogg combines conventions with realistic portrayals of contemporary life. Scotland and Scottish women are vividly portrayed. This was a period of economic and social polarisation. As Allan Cunningham commented, the store-farmer of Hogg's period was in the process of being transformed from someone who 'differed little from the peasants and mechanics around him' into a '*rustic gentleman*'.[2] Hogg uses traditional narrative elements to document this process. For a start, he reflects contemporary patterns of folk speech. In Ettrick during the late eighteenth century, the main spoken language was Southern Scots, and Hogg is adept at reproducing the characteristic grammar and syntax of his 'naiteve tongue' (I, 109), as Emma Letley has discussed. He employs a variety

SHW 3(1992)

of rich imagery in Scots, corroborating George Douglas Brown's belief that the Scottish nation possesses a particularly vivid visual imagination.[3] As might be expected, the characters use a great deal of imagery drawn from the local context. For example, in making his prayer for Gatty's life Daniel Bell, like Davie Tait in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, draws heavily on ovine metaphor:

> O my gracious an' kind Father, dinna tak my bit favourite lamb frae me so soon. Dinna hund the dogs o' disease an' death on my darling ... ere the bleat of the murt has been heard in the ha', or the clank o' the shears ower the head o' the shearling. (II, 135-36)

The second language of Ettrick was English, by this period increasingly used by the wealthier members of Scottish society, and Hogg provides valuable information on this national trend. He highlights the fact that Scots was losing prestige but suggests that current linguistic fashion was unpopular with many rural people. Daniel Bell advises his daughter against 'catching the snappy English pronunciation', arguing that 'ane's mother-tongue suits always the lips of either a bonny lass or an auld carl the best' (I, 29). Mrs Bell speaks her own variety of stilted Scots/English, enraging her husband with her description of his 'toop' as a 'tupe' (I, 17). As Letley has convincingly demonstrated, Hogg draws an intriguing distinction between male and female attitudes to change here: Daniel Bell is presented as a stolidly conservative man who dislikes modern methods of dance and music; the Bell women represent the modern, upwardly-mobile face of Ettrick.[4]

While Hogg presents an argument against English in favour of Lowland Scots, he has little sympathy for outsiders who speak other dialects. He pokes fun at a multiplicity of minorities, from the forthright Northumbrian of Richard Rickleton to French speakers attempting Scots, such as Prince Charles's aide, the foppish De Lancy (paralleled by Lady Jane's French maid in 'Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of an Edinburgh Baillie').[5] Following literary fashion (and no doubt Ettrick prejudice) Hogg imitates Highland speech in a depreciating manner. The Gael is presented as a coarse, inarticulate creature, and to achieve verisimilitude, Hogg sometimes adds a Gaelic phrase: 'Slàint fallain Mòr Gilnaomh gràdach' to toast Sally Niven (III, 78) for instance. As Letley has shown, some elements in Hogg's Highland speech are reasonable attempts at phonetic accuracy: 'pe' instead of 'be' for example; 'Cot' rather than 'God'. But the majority of 'Highland' usages are spurious and demeaning, such as

the constant use of 'be': 'pe tat', 'pe shot', 'pe holding', and 'she' for 'I', 'you', and 'he', and such misrepresentation demonstrates the Scots speaker's feeling of superiority over the average Highlander.[6] Such characterisations of minority speech no doubt demonstrate innate ethnocentrism on Hogg's part, but this must be placed within the context of polite society's increasing contempt for Scots as an oral, and intellectual language. By undermining linguistic alternatives, Hogg is attempting to demonstrate that Scots is the most inherently valuable language in Scotland, and Ettrick Scots is one of its most expressive forms.

Many examples of local language practices are worked into the text. There are bynames [nicknames] like Richard Rickleton's: 'the heather-blooter' from his unfortunate laugh, resembling the 'hoo hoo hoo' call of this bird. Cherry and Gatty are differentiated as the 'lang' lass and the 'short' one, distinctions, incidentally, which along with their opposed temperaments, may be satirical references to Scott's *The Pirate*, published in 1821. There are raucous jokes, including a great deal of word play between Scots and English, as when the minister of Balmillo (a hypocritical prototype for Robert Wringhim) chides Sally for allowing 'filthy lucre' to enter their relationship, she says she does not want 'licquor' but only her wages (III, 212).

Traditional, and spurious, Scots proverbs are consistently used by Hogg. In so doing he demonstrates a thorough understanding of this functional folk form which expresses truisms within the local context in a powerfully condensed manner. 'It's never lost that a friend gets', for example, is a resonant, if insensitive verdict on Cherry Elliot's gaining Gatty's lover (II, 26). Hogg is equally confident with the related form of anecdotes: short narratives told in response to particular situations, and frequently with great humour. As the Bell women bemoan Cherry having gained the lover Gatty rejected, Hogg has Daniel Bell comment with a tale which is probably Hogg's own creation, 'I say again, as Tammy Laidlaw said o' the toop. "Tammy," said I, "ye hae gotten fairly the better in that cut, ye maun gie me up that good toop again." "Na, na, friend," says he, "I want to tak the advantage fairly an' honestly, d—n me but I'll keep it" ' (II, 25).

Another narrative area which Hogg explores is that of animal tales, narratives in which, while retaining their particular qualities, beasts behave, and speak, like crafty humans. They explain certain characteristics of animal behaviour, and often make indirect comments on human behaviour. Unfortunately there are few extant examples from Ettrick, but Hogg occasionally uses the form in context, for instance in

The Brownie of Bodsbeck, where Davie Tait advises Dan against making rash statements with the tale of the tod who lost his tail.[7] One of Hogg's greatest gifts, related to his understanding of animal tales, is his ability to caricature beasts, as with the timid minister's nag in *Three Perils of Woman*, a reluctant actor in the book's comic/supernatural scenes. The nag appears in the first scene of Peril Second, terrified of seeing a ghost in the churchyard, but too curious to avoid looking (III, 4). Later the nag reappears, frightened of dead bodies as they lie scattered around the battlefield from which the Jacobites have just been routed: 'he had a mortal aversion at anything that lay quite dormant. Not that he was terrified of it, but he found something within him that assured him he *might* be exceedingly terrified if it jumped up in any ridiculous manner or form' (III, 192). This hilarious portrait of equine egocentricism shows the animal tale in its contemporary incarnation, as a relatively open-ended form. Yet, Hogg does not stop at reproducing the traditional form: he adapts it to the literary frame of reference, where the nag's behaviour becomes a recurrent, ironic motif. This is Hogg's constant practice with traditional narratives: he merges the inspiration he derives from oral forms with various literary practices.

This is not to deny Hogg's genius in reproducing oral storytelling style. He narrates in the largely impersonal tone of the traditional narrator, a stance adopted in many of the 'rural and traditionary tales'.[8] But the persona often becomes that of a literary gentleman in the *Spectator* mode, presumably intended to give a tone of antiquarian authority to the pieces — albeit tongue-in- cheek. It also allows Hogg to resolve his personally ambiguous feelings towards Ettrick traditions, by assuming a distanced stance. As in the *Confessions*, Hogg makes detached allusions to himself, as a none too subtle form of 'in-joke'. For instance, Peter Gow's jealous behaviour is compared to *sturdy* (water on the brain), or hydrocephalus, as mentioned in Hogg's *The Shepherd's Guide* (III, 218). Hogg cannot resist adding personal touches, in the conversational style of an oral narrator. For instance, when Alaster Mackenzie believes Sally cuckolded him with Peter Gow, Hogg comments: 'If I had been Alaster Mackenzie, I would have returned straight back the way I came, gone on board the American sloop lying in little Loch-Broom, and never more asked after Mòr Gilnaomh' (III, 306).

Techniques of memorate (first-person experience) and fabulate (third-person experience) telling are simulated with enviable ease. In first person accounts, for instance, the tellers will refer to the state of mind they felt at the time, and are usually highly animated. Daft Davie

Duff's account of his own 'murder' is a consummate rendition of this type of tale. Hogg replicates the characteristic verification details which give personal experience narratives their precision quality (III, 65-68). Dates, times and numbers are given; the narrator claims eyewitnesses provided the information as, for example, after Rickleton's triple duel, when the narrator claims to have discussed the affair with Joseph Bell (I, 229). Or the narrator has seen documentary evidence, such as the notes made by chaplain Alexander Gordon on Lady Balmillo's review of Jacobite troops (III, 159). Often the narrator comments on his own, tenuous connections with the incidents. With respect to Sally's dramatic escape from Inverness he states, 'I have been on the very spot where the two waited' (III, 150). Sally's lover, Donald, helps her escape by covering her body with his own, so they look like one person when in fact they are two; a motif which Hogg sometimes reversed, as in the *Confessions* where two bodies are seen when only one (perhaps) existed.

Hogg often admits to shortcomings in his accuracy, as a 'double-bluff' of verification, as when relating the death of the Jacobite lady, Sybil: 'In spite of all the researches I have been able to make, there is a blank in my narrative here, that I found it impossible to supply; but the following is perfectly authenticated' (III, 118). His claims to authenticity are generally founded on the authority of oral history, a source Hogg claims to prefer to all others. With reference to Peter Gow's epic heroism (as decisive as the Basques' rout of Roland's forces at the pass at Roncesvaux) for instance, he follows the traditional tale which said Peter and his comrades fought unaided, to the modern account which claims he informed Lady Balmillo and the Prince (III, 152).

Structuring the book by 'circles' extends and develops traditional narrative techniques. Just as a skilled oral storyteller can spin linked episodes over several nights, so Hogg uses story cycles as linking threads. His constant backtracking on incidents is the product of oral standards. Previous writers have commented on Hogg's lack of chronological perspective. Douglas Gifford has praised the techniques used in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* as early experiment with flashback.[9] Although this is a valid observation, I believe Hogg's stylistic innovation is the product of an oral historical outlook, which recalls the effect of events as they relate to local life and people, describing these in order of significance, rather than in a rigid diachronic fashion. It is an aspect of Hogg's work which is very noticeable in historical passages, for example in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, and while I do not have time to elaborate on this theory here, it is certainly one which would repay

further investigation.

Multiple perspectives are used in a virtuoso manner, for example with respect to Gatty's sleep, and Hogg would return to this method in the *Confessions*. More playfully, Hogg makes pronouncements on love and death, in the fashion of the novel of manners, for instance: 'Death is the great queller of rancour and human pride; even his seen approach subdues them, levels rank, and consumes the substance of the fiery passions' (III, 322) after Peter Gow and Mackenzie's duel. The epistolary novel is both indulged (in Gatty's letter series) and satirised (in Richard Rickleton's correspondence); Gatty in the parodic-romantic opening is like Lockhart at his cloying worst. Hogg's advice to women near the end of Peril First is a humorous rendition of the preaching style he would adopt again in *A Series of Lay Sermons on Good Principles and Good Breeding* (London, 1834), warning against the perils of headstrong first love (II, 331-33). Although Batho and Simpson did not think so, perhaps the style is meant to be humorous in *Lay Sermons*; in this way, as in *Three Perils of Woman*, it is possible for Hogg to maintain a point of view which can be viewed as ironical.

The perils of love are highlighted by using characters who at times lose their individuality to perform plot functions. Here, as elsewhere, Hogg uses Shakespearean-style frail, abandoned women, in the Ophelia-like Cherry Elliot. Other examples of this type include Eleanor, the daughter of the Earl of March in 'The Profligate Princes'.[10] Hogg pursues the Shakespearian analogy in other characters too. Mrs Johnson, like Juliet's nurse, advises her charge on her sexual conduct, with nearly as tragic results; Peter's jealousy is reminiscent of Othello's (III, 227).

Special attention must be given to Gatty's mysterious illness. Here, Hogg is drawing on traditional märchen, or wonder tales. Märchen operate according to their own logic; they are often episodic and contain identifiable motifs. They exhibit characteristic structural patterns, focussing on a single hero and those who oppose the hero, for instance. They have formulaic beginnings and endings, are internally structured by twos and threes and make frequent repetitions and contrasts. The story is a linear progression from an initial lack, to the hero's achievement of personal and financial success. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, such tales were told to Borders children of all social classes, but by the early nineteenth century oral märchen telling was a dying art, developing towards its present status as primarily a literary genre.[11]

The story of Gatty's sleep, and awakening three years later is based

on AT 410 *Sleeping Beauty* in which a maiden is condemned to a period of enchantment, being finally awoken from her magic sleep, often more beautiful than before, by the prince whom she marries.[12] Gatty's sleep has clear parallels with this type and, in this respect, the final incident may be viewed as part of a triple series. Gatty, after all, has other spectacular fainting fits: first in Edinburgh, when she believes M'Ion despises her; second when she learns of Cherry's engagement to M'Ion. After the fainting spell in Edinburgh, Gatty's beauty increases, and she is 'just like a new creature. Like something newly cast off the fashioning iron for a pattern' prefiguring her third collapse after which her hair is longer and fuller, her figure 'sleeker' and even her temperament has improved (I, 143; II, 213-17). On the first at least of these occasions Hogg makes use of motif D.1978.5 *Waking from magic sleep by kiss* (I, 137). Given the traditional importance of threes it is significant that Gatty's sleep lasts three years or, as she believes, three days (a familiar motif from 'Rip Van Winkle') like the period before Christ's Resurrection. True Thomas disappeared for seven years; Kilmeny for a long enough time for the search to stop. It is significant that Gatty's sleep occurs in Circle VII of Peril First, seven being as resonant as three in oral tradition.

Taking advantage of the fact that in his own lifetime the source tales were familiar to the majority of his audience, Hogg invokes a wealth of associations. He intermixes his märchen elements with traditional beliefs about rites of passage, specifically the *saining* (preparation for burial) of a corpse. In this context, Daniel Bell's remarks on his daughter's death are crucial. When Gatty dies, she is not mourned correctly, and Daniel Bell draws explicit attention to the fact: 'The spirits hae brought an uncouth form an' changed it on ye, an' the body o' my dear bairn's ta'en away [stolen by fairies]. Ye hae neither had the Bible aneath the head, nor the saut an' the candle aboon the breast' (II, 179). He need say no more, as the reference to an improper saining is one Hogg's audience would be familiar with. Jamieson's *Scots Dictionary* refers to the 'silly superstition with respect to the danger of a corpse being carried off by some of the agents of the invisible World'.

Saining is described in detail in the Thomas Wilkie manuscript, from which the following information is taken. The body was washed, and laid out on a bed. One of the oldest women performed the saining, waving a candle over the body three times and placing three handfuls of salt in an earthenware dish on the chest of the deceased. Salt represented the soul and was supposed to prevent the corpse, 'from swelling, or rising from the bed of death'. Then three toom (empty)

dishes were placed near the fire; flame representing the soul which was believed to linger in the house. All the windows were opened so the soul could leave. The mourners left the room, returning backwards to put their hands into the dishes. Sometimes a sieve was positioned between the dishes, the woman who put her hand in it being considered lucky, as it helped save the soul. Everyone repeated the dishaloof (in Wales the gwylmabsant or gwylnos), or rhyme of saining, then danced around the dishes singing 'A dis', a dis' o' green gress, a dis', a dis', a dis' '. Bread, cheese, and spirits were consumed, and the attendants went home. A relative watched the corpse, and was later relieved by a stranger, then a relative, and so on. The candle was left burning all night. If the dead were watched at night, the event was called a latewake, if during the day, a sitting. Young people gathered to play games, and invariably the coffin was used as a card table. It was important that everyone should touch the corpse with their hand to prevent evil.

If there was disrespect paid to the dead by subverting these customs, there could be dire consequences. Wilkie refers to an occasion when a youth removed the body from the coffin, and hid in the coffin himself. Neither of the two could be found, and it was believed the fairies had carried off the body; the youth had been killed by the devil. Another event bears strong parallels to Gatty's sleep:

> ... at one of these Latewakes ... the dead man arose up and sat on the bed and frowned dreadfully but did not speak. The salt-plate which stood upon his breast, being by an unseen hand placed on the *rack* of the bed, which indicate that there was something awanting in the performance of the ceremony of the sainin', or that some improper incantation was performed by the attendants.

The body began to make 'frightful noises', just as Gatty's does when M'Ion enters her room, and it was necessary to send for an old religious woman to lay it once more. This was achieved by reading passages of the Bible out loud, praying, recovering the corpse and replacing the salt on its chest. The attendants were ordered to 'give up their wicked amusements and they would not any more be troubled with the Devil'.[13] Daniel Bell, caught between his traditional beliefs and modern rationalism, cannot try exorcism. Instead Gatty is sent to an asylum in Edinburgh, lying for three years in a state between life and death, a 'poor imbecile and degraded being' (II, 187).

Hogg was fond of exploring supernatural sleeps. The 'Poet's Tale' in *Three Perils of Man* uses motif D1960.1 *Seven Sleepers*. After the maids of

Stormont awake they devote their lives to 'acts of holiness', as does Gatty (II, 241). The image of the living body without a soul is used in 'Sir David Graeme', where the bereaved lady explains:

> There's a sleep as deep as the sleep outright
> 'Tis without a feeling or a name;...
> 'Tis a dull an' a dreamless lethargye
> For the spirit strays owre vale an' hill
> An' the bosom is left a vacancy,
> An' when it comes back it is darker still.[14]

This is based on motif D1976.1 *Transportation during magic sleep*. Merlin describes a similar experience in 'The Profligate Princes'. No doubt Hogg's fascination with mysterious sleeps was fuelled by local legends about fairy abductions, like Tam Lin, dramatised by Hogg in 'The Haunted Glen'.[15] Kilmeny's sleep is rooted in such traditions, and in a note to 'Kilmeny' Hogg recounts a local legend relating to a seven-year old girl from Traquair, who mysteriously disappeared, and was only recovered after prayers had been offered for the child in seven Christian churches (the fairies find Christian worship antipathetic, and were unable to retain her). Her recollections of her capture were unclear, but she had been fed well, and sung to sleep by the fairies at night: 'her skin had acquired a bluish cast, which gradually wore off in the course of a few weeks. Her name was Jane Brown; she lived to a very advanced age and was known to many still alive'.[16]

Like Kilmeny, Gatty sees 'visions of glory' during her sleep (II, 206) and 'very little would have made her a proselyte to the belief of enchantment, and the influence of the fairies in weaving the web of her fate' (II, 223). But she has only faint recollections of the period. At first, she says:

> I felt then as it were in the last throes of existence, and as if my soul had been separated from my body, and in it at the same time. At length I thought it made its escape, or that I made my escape, and wandered away darkling among strange people, of different languages. That must have been a dream, but it went on as if it had been for ages, till at last I found myself compelled to come back to my old habitation. (II, 221-22)

Gatty's account is reminiscent of 'near death experience' narratives, when the person is technically dead and then revives. The style and manner of her account is consistent with modern versions, showing a remarkable similarity between varieties of folk transmissions. In the

popular study by Raymond Moody, *Life after Life*, there are many parallel narratives from survivors who recalled moving among other people. It is tempting to speculate that Hogg had heard such accounts in Ettrick oral tradition. Furthermore, Hogg himself had come close to death as a youth, as he describes in his *Memoir*.[17]

Some of Moody's informants, like Gatty, felt the prayers of the living drew them back into life. Traditionally, grieving too much for the dead had terrible consequences. In the *Old Statistical Account* for Montquhitter parish, the minister commented: 'it disturbed the Ghost of the dead, and was fatal to the living, if a Tear was allowed to fall on the Winding Sheet'.[18] Hogg develops this belief, making implicit use of Motif D1962.6 *Magic sleep from breaking tabu*. Daniel Bell, and M'Ion, are convinced that their impious actions have resulted in Gatty's death-like state. Far from thinking his initial prayers mediated with God, as David Groves has suggested, Daniel says he was wrong to pray for Gatty's recovery: 'I hae learned this: That it's wrang in fo'ks to be ower misleared and importunate in their requests to their Maker' (II, 240).[19]

Hogg was fascinated by the psychologically destructive side of the supernatural here, as elsewhere. M'Ion suspects Gatty's 'rooted apprehension was sufficient to cut off a person in perfect health, and how much more one whose distemper prompted her to indulge a visionary sorrow to the greatest extreme' (II, 147). Hogg uses the motif of swooning through the conviction of death in two other instances here. In Peril First, Circle Third M'Ion lies prostrate for a considerable period of time, convinced that Richard Rickleton's bullet has killed him (I, 235-37). In Peril Second daft Davie Duff is convinced he is dead when Henning's corpse falls on him, and as a result is immobilised till Henning's colleagues release him (III, 36-39, 43-45). Hogg makes use of the same motif in 'All Hallow's Eve', where Gemel dies after seeing his own coffin enter the room, during a ritual to predict his future spouse. Wilkie refers to two similar cases in Selkirkshire oral tradition. Similarly, in 'George Dobson's Expedition to Hell' the hero dies because he believes he has an appointment in hell.[20] Cherry actually does die further to her conviction she is going on a journey to her 'father's house', although medical reasons are given by M'Ion (II, 82-101). Hogg's dualistic attitude to traditional culture is evident: while he enjoys writing about traditional customs and beliefs, he is repelled by their potentially repressive aspects.

Although Hogg initially presents the story as a genuine paranormal event he feels obliged to disqualify it with an explanatory coda,

and he provides a variety of rational explanations. Gatty dismisses the possibility she was misled by a 'false spirit' as the information was revealed to her during prayer (II, 212). However, given Hogg's later pronouncements on the possibility of being misled during sacred meditation (witness Wringhim's experience in *Confessions*) this is a rather ambiguous statement. The knowledge there is insanity in the Bell family provides another way out. Cherry's mother is Daniel's 'crazy sister'. Gatty's behaviour has been consistently hysterical: 'she was rather apt to take the pet whiles, and go to her bed' as Cherry comments (II, 38). The nurse, Mrs Story, attributes Gatty's recovery to the skill of the doctor. The doctor thinks it is God's will, adding a medical explanation for Gatty's improved health: 'in this long period of absolute torpidity ... the frame must have ... acquired a thorough renovation' (II, 207).

There are symbolic aspects to Gatty's sleep. On one level it represents the predicament of a woman in love, especially one acting 'in conformity to modern manners' (I, 85). As Hogg comments:

> IS NOT YOUTHFUL LOVE THE FIRST AND THE GREATEST PERIL OF WOMAN? I have shown, by a simple relation, all founded on literal facts, that, by yielding to its fascinating sway, she is exposed to the loss of life — the loss of reason — the loss of virtue, of honour, and of happiness. What can be more dreadful? (II, 331-32)

Yet, as I have suggested, such statements may be intended to be taken with a pinch of salt. Gatty's notions of love are frequently ridiculed. Daniel Bell is dismissive of his daughter's 'skirlin fits of love' (II, 48), and the narrator's romantic pronouncements are often tongue-in-cheek: 'O love! what inconsistent things canst thou not make a maiden to do? And what gnawing pains canst thou not make her feel, by way of retribution' (I, 222). Hogg attacks the tendency to coyness and 'leasing' in courting, preferring the open tactics of Cherry Elliot to the feigned hatred of Gatty Bell. 'The effects of equivocation', according to Hogg, affect all women, even (or especially) Lady Balmillo and 'the most superior class of the sex' (III, 24).

However, the tone is not wholly comic. Hogg is no misogynist, and he emphasises the pathetic aspects of his women's predicament. As Mrs Rickleton's servant states: 'Really, we ought to be pitied; for we are as much in his [man's] power as the flowers of the field, that he walks over and treads down at his will' (II, 281). Cherry Elliot's dream is an early portent of her sad demise, rather like Waverley's allegorical climb with Flora in its specifics.[21] Sally has an equally affecting dream

prefiguring the death of Peter Gow (III, 282-83), and her final situation, drawing on the traditional song 'Jenny Nettles' is tragic and moving (III, 371). Gatty's folly is, moreover, portrayed with a great deal of sympathy, as it is made clear her mother and nurse, as well as 'every love-song and ballad of the country' have conditioned her (I, 53). Cherry's attitude is motivated more by common sense: unlike Gatty she has not suffered the dissociation of consciousness which comes with modern society. Cherry can distinguish fiction and reality, realising, 'women are not born to be steeples, like some vain friends I could name' (I, 72). Hogg, then, moves between ironic and serious statements on romantic love, probably indicating his own ambivalent attitudes.

As Mack has suggested, there are religious and moral implications too, and Gatty is partly sacrificial victim for the sins of her family and their collective guilt for Cherry's death.[22] As she lies in her bridal white she experiences a near-mystical ecstasy (II, 157-62). Cherry, too, is a sacrificial 'lamb' (II, 99). Given the preoccupation of the trilogy with Highland/Lowland (Jacobite/Hanoverian) relationships, the fact that Gatty is a Lowlander, and M'Ion a Highlander is particularly significant. The three years paralysis including the birth of a beautiful child no doubt suggests the future of a reunified Scotland. There are implications about the futile behaviour of the upper classes, although Hogg draws distinctions between male and female attitudes to The Cause.

Far from being apolitical as is often suggested, Hogg holds a jaded view of aristocrats, particularly male aristocrats — Sybil and Lady Balmillo are unquestionably brave, if tragic, figures. But the insipid M'Ion is a ridiculously timid lover, who fails to declare his affection for Gatty because of his 'evil destiny' (I, 62), and accepts Cherry's jilting without real protest. He drops to the ground effetely when a bullet grazes his head (I, 235). To my mind, one of the great enigmas in the book is how a woman of Cherry Elliot's good sense could fall for a man who calls her 'my sweet Border zephyr' (I, 76). Hogg's disdain for the idle rich is an aspect of his philosophy seen, for instance, in 'The Profligate Princes', which draws on the 'Goodman of Ballengeich' (James V) legend cycle to portray Scotland's medieval nobility as debauched and heartless. His portrait of the Black Douglas, Lord of Ettrick Forest in *Three Perils of Man*, is similarly disparaging. He ridicules the Douglas's 'abundantly extravagant' gestures, and draws attention to his willingness to murder women.[23] Scott's portrayal of the same character in *Tales of a Grandfather* is much more sycophantic.

Hogg is totally at ease, however, with the legendary figures of the Borders' reivers: fighting men who were traditionally believed to follow their own moral code, honourable tricksters akin to international outlaws like Jesse James and Robin Hood. Hogg draws on traditional reiving heroes for several characters, such as Simon Brodie in *Tales of the Wars of Montrose*, Charlie Scott of Yardbire in *Three Perils of Man* (modelled on Wat of Harden, the Selkirkshire fighter who rescued the infant 'Minstrel Burne' in a raid on Cumberland). Richard Rickleton, from South of the Border, is an archetypal reiver: obsessed with 'gear'; gruff and ridiculously brave. He cries readily and is soft hearted towards women and children. Equally Hogg moulds several characters on legendary Borders' viragos, like the 'Fair Maiden Lilliard' who fought beside her lover at Ancrum Moor in 1545. Bessy Chisholm in *Three Perils of Man* is in this mould and Sally Niven's marathon-style run to warn of Loudon's forces approach is a worthy feat for a local legend. Hogg offers unparalleled insights into traditional Ettrick concepts of the hero, in developing such characters (III, 149).

Gatty's strange state is almost a metaphor for Hogg's attitudes to traditional culture, and for his position in contemporary literary circles. Traditional-style material was expected from Hogg, yet he could not accept such traditions without exclusion from the literary circles, and financial success, which he so desperately needed. Furthermore, shared traditions of folk life — work, social life, custom and belief — made for a sense of community identity in the Forest, and Hogg was unwilling to sever ties which were vital to personal and creative identity. Hogg must often have felt, like Gatty, in a state of mental paralysis.

Unusually, Hogg had adopted an attitude of total belief with respect to the supernatural in *Three Perils of Man*, but the poor reception of this work explains why he reverted to his usual cautious practice in *Three Perils of Woman*, neither accepting nor rejecting traditional values. He used traditional narrative elements to add richness and depth to his tales, and to make valid points about contemporary culture: on the need to maintain the Scots language for instance, and to bypass current romantic notions of love. As a creative writer, this tactic undoubtedly contributed to Hogg's success, and *Three Perils of Woman* marks an important point in the evolution of his technique.

Yet Hogg's use of traditional-style material was perhaps more unconscious than I have implied; after all such methods of expression were natural for Hogg, and he was a born mimic. I am going to end

with a question, leading on from Hogg's use of traditional narrative elements, and from the ambiguities in his treatment. In the light of the ongoing discussion of role-playing among Scottish writers — see, for instance, Kenneth Simpson's *Protean Scot* (1988) — is *The Three Perils of Woman* meant to be taken seriously, or is it in effect a parody, covering Hogg's own unsureness about his cultural identity?

NOTES

1 James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman; or, Love, Leasing, and Jealousy. A Series of Domestic Scottish Tales*, 3 vols (London, 1823), II, 320. References to this edition are hereafter given within the text in parentheses.

2 Quoted in James Hogg, 'Memoir of Burns', in *The Works of Robert Burns*, edited by James Hogg and William Motherwell, 5 vols (Edinburgh, 1841), V, 130-31.

3 See Emma Letley, 'Some Literary Uses of Scots in *The Three Perils of Woman*', in *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 1 (1990), 57-70. For Scots' visual qualities see George Douglas Brown, *The House with the Green Shutters* (London, 1967), pp.133-34.

4 Letley, p.48.

5 James Hogg, *Tales of the Wars of Montrose*, 3 vols (London, 1835), I, 73-75.

6 See Emma Letley, '"The Management of the Tongue"; Hogg's Literary Uses of Scots', *Papers Given at the second James Hogg Society Conference (Edinburgh 1985)*, edited by Gillian Hughes (Aberdeen, 1988), pp.11-23.

7 James Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, edited by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh and London, 1976), p.135.

8 Hogg adopts this phrase in connection with *Winter Evening Tales* in his letter to Archibald Constable, 20 May 1813, in National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS) MS 7200, f.203. I am grateful to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for permission to make quotation from the manuscript material in their care in this essay.

9 Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp.83-84.

10 In *Dramatic Tales*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1817), II, 1-187.

11 Hogg's brother William recollected that their mother, Margaret Laidlaw, did in fact tell her children 'tales of kings, giants, knights, fairies, kelpies, brownies, etc., etc.' to keep them quiet while she did her household work — see Mrs Garden, *Memorials of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd* (Paisley, undated), p.13.

12 See Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of The Folktale*, second revised edition (Helsinki, 1964); Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols (Helsinki, 1932-36).

13 In NLS MS 121, ff.8-9, and ff.1-2; see also NLS MS 122. Reprinted as 'Old Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs of the Inhabitants of

Scotland. Collected by T. Wilkie', in *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists Club*, 23 part 1 (1916); Sir Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering*, Chapter 26.

14 This passage appears in *The Mountain Bard*, 'third edition' (Edinburgh, 1821), pp.12-13 and in subsequent editions, though neither in the first edition of 1807 or in the first published version in the *Scots Magazine*, 67 (September 1805), 701-03.

15 *Dramatic Tales*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London), II, 189-271.

16 James Hogg, *The Queen's Wake: a Legendary Poem* (Edinburgh and London, 1819), pp.365-67. This is the 'fifth' or subscription edition.

17 Raymond Moody, *Life after Life*, 41st printing (New York, 1988). I am grateful to Elaine Petrie for drawing my attention to the passage prefacing *The Mountain Bard* where Hogg refers to his almost fatal illness (pp.xvii- xviii). Nineteenth century accounts of trance-like states include 'Observations on Animal Magnetism', the 'Remarkable Case of Margaret Lyall', and D. D., 'Singular Recovery from Death' in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1 (September 1817), 563-67, 1 (April 1817), 62-64, and 10 (September 1821), 582-87 respectively. The last two in particular may have offered prototypes for Gatty's experience.

18 A. Johnstone in *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, edited by Sir John Sinclair, 21 vols (Edinburgh, 1799), XXI, 147.

19 See 'Myth and Structure in James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Woman*', in *The Wordsworth Circle*, 13 (1982), 204.

20 *Dramatic Tales*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1817), I, 32-46; in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 21 (May 1827), 549-62.

21 See Chapter 22 of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*.

22 See Douglas Mack, 'Gatty's Illness in *The Three Perils of Woman*', in *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 1 (1990), 133-35.

23 James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft*, edited by Douglas Gifford (Edinburgh and London, 1972) p.40 ff.

Glasgow

The Sinner versus the Scholar: two exemplary models of mis-re-membering and mis-taking signs in relation to Hogg's *Justified Sinner*

David Petrie

First of all an image:

> Wherever I look, wherever I raise my eyes,
> The blackening ruins of my life arise.[1]

The first part of this paper has autobiographical overtones, is risky, unscholarly and problematic. I divulge information about my own personal life — information I would be wary of delivering at home, and for me Italy is home or as near as home is ever likely to be. My quotation from Cavafy, I should explain, provides me with the image of 'raising ones eyes' and is the quintessence of my solidarity with young Robert Wringhim. There now follows something akin to a confession.

My story is problematic in that it subverts the categories of time. And I, for one, am sufficiently impressed (or indeed impressionable) to take Jorge Luis Borges seriously when he extrapolates on Billy the Kid telling us in an unforgettable sentence that:

> He [Billy] never quite matched his legend but he kept getting closer and closer to it.[2]

This story too contains a legend or a motif which is universal but which reaches giddy heights in Calvinist Scotland, where we find an inordinate preoccupation with predestination and determinism.

If I can anticipate a criticism — namely, that personal confessions should be directed to quacks and priests and have no place in academic conferences — I would reply as follows: *all* attempts at literary criticism are personal in so far as they are attempts, made by individuals, to relate literature to life. My story is, in any case, a personal account of an experience of *doubling*. And I might add, that whatever the depth of the analysis in my situation or in any given situation, there is always a fiction, a story, involved. It is life which imitates literature —